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MONTHLY RETROSPECT OF POLITICS.

WE have now nearly reached the period when the changes effected in the political state of Europe, by a few month's negotiation, will exhibit the talents of Bonaparte, as effective and preponderating in the cabinet, as his genius is rapid and irresistible in the field. The scenes passing on the Tagus and Scheld cannot for a moment withdraw his eye from the unfortunate Francis; the latter and his ministry, fascinated by their powerful enemy, seem to have lost all capacity of providing for their safety; and the event will show that they have absolutely submitted their very existence as a nation to the future discretion of the conqueror. We may fairly assume that peace has already been concluded, and that the late Austrian empire will not, as after the peace of Presburg, be left in a condition speedily "*to abuse Bonaparte's generosity.*" Should this be the case, we do not see how he can be charged with severity. He once gave them terms which they had no right to expect a second time at his

mercy—and would not we ourselves, would not the British nation in such a case, provide against future injury from the wounded pride of those they had humbled?

Sweden also, has been obliged to purchase her existence as a nation by the sacrifice of almost half her territory. The maxim of her late king, "restoration of the Bourbons, no peace with the French government," has produced its due effect, in the fall of the weaker party. The notion of eternal war, which is now a favourite with many, is most abhorrent to the natural feelings of mankind; it is equally subversive of society, repugnant to justice, and contrary to the spirit of christianity. War should be considered by governments as an extreme case, and carried on for some specific and justifiable object; not waged indefinitely, to gratify individual caprice, or for something which its advocates can never sufficiently explain. The latter could never take place, nor nations become instruments in the hands of ambitious statesmen,

did the people possess a due weight in the government, or were *their* happiness considered of sufficient consequence to influence the conduct of their governors. As to those who think that a country can maintain its independence longer, and have its prosperity better promoted, by continuing in a state of hostility with all its neighbours than by cultivating the arts of peace, we know not upon what principles their opinion is founded: but this we think certain, that the kingdom which avowedly makes its safety to depend on such a state of things will speedily be driven from its rank among the nations. Endless war between two parties is an anomaly, an absurdity, for it must end in the destruction of one of them: history and common sense equally agree in this: even a constant state of warfare has never succeeded long but with one people; and their success was owing to the policy of incorporating the conquered nations, and admitting them to a full participation of rights and privileges with themselves. France is now in some degree pursuing the same policy; but the peculiar circumstances of England, prevent her taking advantage of it. Her evident policy is peace. The superior industry, the predominating capital, the advantageous situation, and the commercial and enterprising spirit of the people of these islands, will always entitle them to respect; and were these advantages seconded by a government possessing the confidence, and capable of calling forth the energies of the country; it were too feeble, too degrading an expression to say, that she could maintain her independence.—She would have a commanding rank, a preponderating influence among the kingdoms of Europe; be able to assert her dignity with effect, or inflict chastisement for the wanton aggressions of her enemies. There appears to be another method by which England might meet her present opponent on equal terms, and counteract his arts by an honest and more prevailing policy. She cannot surround herself with confederate and dependent states, nor place princes on the thrones of captive or degraded monarchs; let her then assume

that generous character evidently suggested by her own admirable constitution, "*Friend of the human race, and protector of the liberties of mankind.*" Let her show the nations the practical blessings of freedom, and assist their efforts in procuring these blessings for themselves, and for their children. Unterrified by the phantom of a name, let her advocate revolution, and pour forth expeditions;—not to prop the tottering thrones of despots, nor curse her allies by forcing their inclinations in favour of an "*infamous government,*" but to rescue men from slavery, and erect the empire of religion and reason on the ruins of intolerance; let her teach them to make justice the foundation of their civil institutions, and rear their political system on the inalienable rights of their citizens. In a word, their view should be directed to the British Constitution; that by seeing the blessings enjoyed under it, the danger we have escaped by its *shadow*, and the prosperity to which the country has attained, notwithstanding the multiplied and enormous abuses by which it is deformed, they might be induced to approximate their own to the same standard, and by using it as a beacon avoid the rocks whereon we are likely to founder. There are countries enough in Europe and America for this purpose, which ought to be excited by some means to form independent governments, with motives sufficient to engage the individuals composing them to fight heartily in their defence. These would be useful counterpoises, as well as auxiliaries to each other, and would form points of resistance against which Bonaparte would waste his strength in vain.—Spain, Portugal, Sicily, European and great part of Asiatic Turkey *yet* remain on this side the Atlantic, and might be made powerful and efficient engines in the hands of an able statesman; on the other side, the extensive provinces of Buenos Ayres, Terra Firma, Mexico and Peru, and the principality of Brazil, are equally, or better adapted for all the purposes of defence and annoyance. Considering the present circumstances of Great Britain, and especially her manufacturing habits, these latter places, under

the management of a liberal and manly policy, might become the most faithful and beneficial allies which she ever possessed. They might now be delivered from a most grievous state of uncertainty: they might be encouraged to assert their independence, instructed in the mode of obtaining, and defended in the enjoyment of it. They might now be attached by the most substantial benefits; benefits which this country only has the power to bestow, and which would soon be returned tenfold into our bosoms.

We reluctantly fall back to despondence; but we fear there is neither ability, spirit, nor virtue to accomplish these important purposes. Our statesmen are not eminent for such qualities; we cannot challenge competition with our neighbours, nor cast their vices into shade by the splendour of our virtues. Indeed a dereliction of principle seems to be gaining ground in the intercourse of christian nations, at which the heathens of antiquity would have blushed: a proposition submitted to the populace of Athens, two thousand years ago, was instantly and indignantly rejected for its baseness; an aggravated counterpart of which has lately been acted on by our statesmen, defended in the senate, and applauded by many ministers of the Gospel of Peace! A retributive justice frequently visits those violations of national faith with severe and appropriate punishment. A flagrant breach of this kind took place some years ago in the partitioning of Poland by three unprincipled despots; two of whom have since been partitioned almost to annihilation, and the third appears to be fast approaching his catastrophe, which, by a common fatality, he himself is actively instrumental in hastening.

We would wish, then, to impress the eternal obligation of justice and humanity in the conduct of nations towards each other, equally, or even more strongly than in the case of individuals; as a violation of them in the former case gives a wider circulation to error, and presents a pernicious example, which diffuses its baneful effects by weakening the obligation, and sapping the foundations of religion and morality through the

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whole community. We would also desire to inculcate what we conceive sobriety and justness of thinking in relation to peace and war: two neighbouring families in a state of open hostility, and eager and watchful for opportunities to accomplish each other's ruin, might as well be expected to rise to eminence during the conflict, and increase in industry, wealth, and power, and especially in those qualities of the heart and mind which constitute the chief blessing of existence, as two powerful nations similarly bent on destruction. The spirit of emulation may cause them for a time to shine with a deceitful splendour, but the principle of dissolution is operating; and they will either be destroyed by the gradual wasting of an atrophy, or a general convulsion will put a more violent termination to the struggle.

ENGLAND.

IN the last number of the *Edinburgh Review*, in which much casuistry is employed on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, "to make the worse appear the better cause," and to reconcile us to the present constitution of the House of Commons, in opposition to a reform in parliament, a broad accusation is brought forward against the people of these countries, that they are so fond of war, that with a reformed House of Commons expressing correctly the sense of the majority of the people, wars would not be less frequent, and consequently the taxation necessary to support them would not be materially lessened. With sorrow we acknowledge our inability to repel this accusation, for we fear from past experience it is too well grounded. To go no further back than the wars of the present reign, the American war was popular at the commencement: disappointment forced the people to a sounder sentiment, and Lord North was, after a long struggle, driven from the helm to make way for peace. If the Parliament had been the correct echo of popular feeling, they would not probably have prevented the American war, though they would at a more early period have resisted the accumulated influence of ministerial power through the various ramifications of

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contractorships, loan jobbing, &c. &c. and sooner terminated the contest so profitable to the leeches of the state, but so burthensome to the nation at large. The present long protracted war with France was popular with the majority of the people, though a virtuous minority withstood the general phrensy, and were in consequence, with that honest and illustrious statesman, Charles James Fox at their head, generally stigmatized with the epithets of jacobins and enemies to their country. If the present weight of taxation, and the continued ill success of the war are now operating in some degree to produce a contrary feeling, the change is more owing to selfish motives than to a sense of justice. We make these remarks with feelings of national condemnation; and call on all seriously to consider how far by their love of war, and the false glory of contest, they have contributed to the present destructive and overwhelming state of wide-spreading warfare. Let each bring it home to "his own business and bosom." We cannot justly blame administration for carrying on wars; it is their harvest; if we ourselves are deluded by false splendour to approve of the sanguinary contest. Governments are often influenced by ambition, and the sordid desire to enjoy the profits and patronage always increased to them in war, while the people are dazzled by mistaken notions of national honour, and undefined ideas of natural enemies.

As a contrast to the many pompous accounts of national prosperity with which we are frequently furnished by the public papers, let us select from the *London Morning Chronicle* of the 7th inst. the following trait of distress, most probably justly referrible to our system of warfare, which at once produces heavy taxation, and shuts us out from regularly receiving foreign supplies, by which causes conjointly the white quartern loaf, weighing 4*lb.* 6*oz.* avoirdupois, in London, is now raised to 17*d.* and the household to 15½*d.* which latter, at the commencement of the war was only 7*d.* and we are obliged to seek a supply of grain from France, as appears by the licences from the Privy Council;

although it was one of the measures of the Pitt administration to attempt to starve France, in a supposed scarcity affecting that country.

"On Wednesday evening, a poor young woman, almost naked, with a child in her arms in the same condition, was detected stealing a loaf of bread from a baker's shop in Pimlico; on being discovered, she dropped on her knees, praying forgiveness, declaring that neither of them had eaten any that day. The wife of the baker then went with her to her lodgings, where, being well convinced of her extreme distress, she not only pardoned the offence, but allowed her to take the loaf, to which she added another for her child, and ordered her to call once a week for a similar allowance, with a caution never to be guilty of the like again."

By giving this sorrowful relation, we are not afraid that we shall be misunderstood, as countenancing the invading the property of others by theft. Thieves more generally plunder to support idleness and profligacy, than to satisfy the necessary calls of hunger. We admit that instances of the latter are rare, but in this case, we are warranted to suppose, from the subsequent inquiry made by the woman, from whom the bread was taken, that actual starvation was the cause of the act. This is one of the trophies of war, and such scenes are more suitable objects of contemplation, than the delusive glories of "the tented field."

The Common Council of the City of London, have prepared an address to the king, on the anniversary of his accession, and after much wavering and contrary motions, have resolved to apply 1000*l.* to the releasing of insolvent debtors in the city of London, in preference to spending that sum in a public feast on the day of the Jubilee. If the day must be celebrated in some way, the relief of distress is certainly preferable to the indulgence of a feast on the forty-ninth anniversary of a reign, which the order of the privy council for a form of thanksgiving, justly calls "a long and arduous reign." In history it will be characterised as signally unfortunate.

Every successive month confirms us in the conviction, that public spirit is

in a state of great depression in these countries, and excites our doubts as to the possibility of resuscitating it. As yet little stir is made in the counties, to follow the example of Middlesex in resolutions and petitions in favour of Parliamentary Reform. We fear there is much truth and just appreciation of popular feeling in the remark of Charles James Fox, made a short time before his lamented death. On being told that the people of England, were beginning, by their public meetings, to show some symptoms of the return of public spirit, he replied! "Ah! it is only like galvanism, a twitch here, and a twitch there; but the heart is dead."

While this want of public spirit remains, it is of little consequence who are ministers. Yet it is pleasing to see that Lords Grey and Grenville have had so much regard to consistency as to refuse to be connected with Percival, Eldon and Liverpool, and the remaining part of the administration. We should still more highly praise the consistency of Lord Grey, if he would now support the plan of parliamentary reform, which he brought forward in 1792. Canning and Castlereagh go out, and there seems some disposition to make the latter the scape-goat, to bear the blame of the disastrous expedition to the Scheldt, but we expect nothing better from their successors joined to the old set who keep in. Indeed, if by any means the Marquis of Wellesley be brought into the cabinet, we should deprecate the change. Misapplied energy is worse than imbecility. We recollect the manacling of the liberty of the press at Calcutta, and have no wish to see the experiment, it may prove a fatal one, revived at home.

The inefficiency and want of true love of country in the administration, are incidentally discovered afresh to the public in the letters and counter-manifestoes of the Ex-Secretaries. Canning several months ago expressed his opinion, that Castlereagh was an incapable minister, and obtains the acquiescence of the cabinet to this proposition, and yet after this avowed acknowledgment of his incapacity, Castlereagh is permitted to direct the ill-contrived and ill-managed expedition to the coast of Holland. If Canning's motives had arisen from a regard

to the welfare of his country, he would not have consented to leave so momentous a concern under such management. But the whole business was a cabal for place, and to *serve friends*, with an utter disregard to the public good. Yet these men have the unblushing effrontery to publish their manifestoes, and appeal to the people, as if they were interested in their intrigues for office. But let the people profit by such disclosures, and without taking part with either, or with the remaining members of the cabinet, who are equally implicated in the foul transaction, learn to see our modern statesmen as they are, solely intent on their own emoluments, and regardless of the interests of the state. As they disregard the interests of the people, so let the people show a proper spirit by not entering into their petty cabals. A more bare-faced dereliction of public principle has not often occurred. What can be expected from a nation thus governed?

Mark what a scene London presents! The distresses of the army in Spain and Holland, an administration tottering from the imbecility of its component parts, bolstered up by props of not better materials, a most enormous load of taxation, commerce nearly excluded except by stealth from the continent of Europe; America irritated against us by our diplomatic blunders, and ready to join the long muster-roll of our enemies, the high price of the quartern loaf, of more pressing importance than the terms of admission into a theatre, and all the combined difficulties of our situation, give way to a theatrical contest, which threatens to introduce among us the evils of the rival factions at the theatre, which at once marked and accelerated the downfall of the lower Greek empire. The contests at Covent Garden, and the more solemn farce of the Jubilee absorb the public attention, and give to us the indisputable claim to a thoughtless people, who surrounded by real dangers, regardless of the precipices at each hand, pass heedlessly on in the paths of folly and dissipation. Cowper, the poet of nature, and of moral feeling, well describes this state:

" 'Tis pleasant through the loop-holes of retreat,

To peep at such a world, to see the stir,
 And gay confusion: roses for the cheeks,
 And lilies for the brows of faded age,
 Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,
 Heav'n, earth, and ocean, plunder'd of
 their sweets,
 Nectareous essences, Olympian dews,
 Sermons and city-feasts, and favourite airs,
 Ethereal journeys, submarine exploits,
 And Katterfelto with his hair on end,
 At his own wonders, wond'ring for his
 bread.
 It is not seemly, nor of a good report,
 That she is slack in discipline: more
 prompt,
 T' avenge than to prevent the breach of
 law;
 That she is rigid in denouncing death,
 On petty robbers, and indulges life,
 And liberty, and oft times *honour* too,
 To speculators of the public gold;
 That thieves at home must hang; but he
 that puts
 Into his over-gorged and bloated purse,
 The wealth of *Indian provinces* escapes,
 This is not well, nor can it come to good."

Some prosecutions have lately taken place on account of the proposed emigration of artisans. It is unreasonable to prevent any class of people from seeking to better their condition by removing to that country, to which their interest or inclination may lead them. It is the remnant of the old intolerant system of commerce, which the more enlightened and liberal policy of Adam Smith, and others, has not yet eradicated. Like other deep-rooted prejudices, it long retains its hold on our system of legislation.—The only allowable, and indeed the only effectual way to prevent emigration is by good government, and a wise system of legislation and policy, to make it the interest of all the inhabitants to stay at home;—unless the population is too great for the means of subsistence, and in such a case the country is benefited by the emigration of a superabundant population.

It is reported that a meeting of the county of Northumberland is soon to be held to take into consideration the state of the nation.—Never was it more requisite for the people to consider the situation of public affairs. The real promoters of safety, are they who faithfully point out the impending danger, unlike the in-

terested watchman who cries "all is well," that he may continue his practice of plunder, even in the hour of danger. The governments on the Continent have fallen one by one, because the voice of reform was not timely attended to. The vices of the old court of France, the dreadful entail of the debaucheries of Louis the XV. on his grandson; the intrigues of Maria Antoniette, and the total dissolution of public morals, were more powerfully effectual in promoting the revolution, than the cabals of clubs, or, the improved systems of philosophers. May the warning voice from the tombs of the Capets be not heard in vain!

At a meeting which lately took place at Liverpool, an illumination on the Jubilee was out-voted, and in its place they have established an *address*, a *statue*, a *procession*, and a *ball*. The subscription to the statue is 20 guineas, and for the relief of imprisoned debtors five!!! Shame on the times, when images of stone are preferred to the living monuments of good works!

IRELAND.

In another part of this Magazine, among the public occurrences, will be found an account of a fete at Hillsborough, given on the Marquis of Downshire's coming of age. We allude to it in this place, as thinking it deserves to be noticed in the political department of the month, because so well-conducted an entertainment marks a becoming respect from a landlord to his tenants, and tends to draw closer the bands of mutual regard between the different classes of society. Let us not permit the subject to pass unnoticed, as one of the trifling events of the day, but endeavour to supply some practical observations.

About eight years ago, the late head of the house of Hill breathed his last at Hillsborough, sunk under the weight of political disappointment. It is not our present business at much length "to seek his merits to disclose or draw his frailties from their dread abode." His was a mixed, though a strongly marked character, which would, under right direction, have produced many splendid virtues, but it was not free from some striking errors

It is to be regretted that the bent to his energetic mind took a wrong direction in the crooked, and too often immoral path of election politics. Would that his energy had been directed to higher purposes! Hillsborough, at the time of his death, exhibited the exterior of mourning. Now in the revolution of a few years, it has become the scene of rejoicing. A young man, said to possess amiable dispositions, and the fine unblunted feelings of youthful sensibility, acquiring the possession of a large property, affords legitimate cause for rejoicing, and we partake of the joyful sensations of the moment. But amid the noise of mirth and the parade of festivities, the philanthropist looks forward with anxious solicitude for fruit from so fair promise, and ardently desires that the ingenuous feelings of youth just emerging from a course of liberal education, may not be injured by an intercourse with the debasing system of politics, of which self alone is the centre; or by the routine of fashionable life, of which profusion and avarice often form the heterogeneous compound. We sincerely hope that the expectations which we now entertain, may in future life be realized; and that if the Marquis should live some forty-nine or fifty years hence to celebrate the jubilee of his accession to his estates, he may then justly be the object of general well-merited regard, as he is at present of high raised expectation. **VIRTUE ALONE IS THE TRUE NOBILITY.** Let him who earns the wreath wear it.

Dublin has the merit, such as it is, of first taking public measures for celebrating the jubilee. With a ball they have coupled what some suppose a patriotic plan to promote the sale of Irish manufactures by the dresses on this occasion. But the casual support sought for from fashion, will do very little to benefit a country. It is a steady regular system of trade and manufactures, built on the firm basis of commercial frugality and industry, that can alone serve us. Such eleemosynary aids to trade only debase the true spirit of the people, and make them cringe to the leaders of fashion for support. The true funds for enlarging trade, are not drawn from the accidental expenses of a few

of the luxurious classes of society, but from the steady resources of a regular demand. For a while the jubilee bid fair to answer the purpose of diverting public attention from the critical situation of our affairs at home and abroad. But the device has not succeeded in all places to the extent that was expected. An inquiry for what we are to rejoice, or for what we are to give thanks, has abated the ardour of the jubilee celebrators, and introduced some reflections not favourable to such plans. In London, and some other places, a direction has been given to the jubilee, to turn it to a subscription for the relief of the poor, and the release of insolvent debtors. This scheme is certainly better than the uproars of feasting and illuminations, but still the question presents—has the public happiness increased so greatly since the year 1760, as to render a celebration necessary, or justifiable on strict and rigid principle?

As to the plan of treating the poor, on the occasion to a public drinking bout as at an election, it appears degrading to a free people: tumult and huzzas may be bought, but the really felt homage of the heart is not to be purchased on such terms from the more valuable and independent part of the people. The profligate and drunken may be easily hired to shout, though unable to tell for what cause, and many may spout their loyalty at public dinners.

“Drink and be mad then: ’tis your country bids,

Gloriously drunk, obey the important call;

Her cause demands the assistance of your throats;

Ye all can swallow and she asks no more.”

but men of reflection retire with a sigh, deeply impressed with the sentiment, that the present critical time require other defenders, and assistances better adapted to the exigence.—In Belfast a mandate for a general illumination was issued by the chief magistrate, though by what law or charter he is authorized to make such an order is unknown: consequently it is presumed that had any injury been sustained by individuals in case of illuminations taking place from such an order, the responsibility of making

good the damage would have been awarded against him by the laws of our country. But the illuminations were bought off by a compromise to raise a subscription for the poor. Under the circumstance of its being a commutation for illuminations it cannot however be considered as a voluntary donation. It is not our business to describe the festivities of the day. We rather chuse to balance usefulness against pageantry, the benefits of education against the false splendour of illuminations, and give from the *Belfast Commercial Chronicle* of the 25th inst an estimate of the comparative expense of supporting a school for the education of the poor, and the cost of illuminating the town of Belfast.

"By a census taken of Belfast, in the year 1803, there were 3514 houses inhabited. At a general illumination to continue for three hours, suppose on an average each house to consume three pounds of candles, at 13d. per pound, the amount would be £571 0. 6. the interest on which would amount yearly to £34 5. 2. By last year's statement of the *Belfast Sunday School*, the whole expenditure was £32 11. 7. where 245 children receive useful instruction, and are put in a fair way of bettering their own condition, and of becoming useful members of civilized society. The reader will decide on the merits of the two expenditures. The contrast will show the general benefit that may accrue, by money being expended on useful purposes."

The illuminations in Dublin have been splendid and costly. A fondness for show, without considering the fitness of the occasion, or the ability to bear the expense, is characteristic of the Irish nation. Our national debt is rapidly increasing. Last year Eng-

land borrowed about ten millions, while Ireland increased her debt by loans of 5,389,728*l.* It appears to be the present policy of our finance minister to borrow lavishly, and stave off the payment as long as he can. The nation gains a short respite from taxation, and the minister is indulged with present ease. But a heavy load is accumulating, which cannot long be kept back from pressing most heavily on the community, and in the mean time a most profuse, improvident, and wasteful expenditure adds to our burthens. Things cannot go on much longer in the present train. Already the English say that our population and commerce are rapidly encroaching, and call for a commensurate increase of taxation. To those who know Ireland, such reasoning will appear fallacious, and by them her inability to bear much additional weight of taxation is admitted. But sooner or later we shall certainly be called on, and it would be wise in time to husband our resources, and cut off all needless expenditure. In Ireland, the unpaid balances in the hands of collectors amount to 375,483*l.* 11*s.* 4*d.* upon a revenue of between five and six millions, while the balance in the hands of collectors in England, on their prodigious revenue of 67 millions, amounts only to 354,126*l.* 5*s.* 4*d.* The revenue of the Post-office is collected in Scotland, at the rate of 14*l.* 10*s.* 2*d.* per cent. in England at 23*l.* 2*s.* 5*d.* while in Ireland it costs 45*l.* 3*s.* 1½*d.*

The Writers of the Retrospect for last month, request the readers of the Belfast Monthly Magazine, will excuse some errors of the Press, which escaped in that part, in consequence of hurry in working off the last sheets of that number.

PUBLIC OCCURRENCES.

ULSTER.

ANTRIM....*Married...* Mr. S. Barber, of Belfast, merchant, to Miss Moore, of Crooked-stone. Mr. J. Cunningham, of Ballyclare, surgeon, to Jane, daughter of the late Mr. H. Houston, of Ballylagan.

Died... At Knockmore, county Antrim, Miss Ann Fulton, aged 18 years. On the

5th inst. aged 45, John Cranston, esq. of Belfast, a good husband, father, and friend. In Belfast, Mrs. Turnly, wife of Alex. Ternly. In Castle-street, Belfast, Miss Brice. At Glenarm, Mr. Andrew Dunne. In Chichester-street, Belfast, Mrs. Calwell, aged 70; few thorough life were more useful, or in death more regretted